

Effect of Yoga and Meditation on Health

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Abstract: Yoga, an ancient practice and meditation, has become increasingly popular in today's busy life. In an age where the younger generation is facing health problems at an abnormal rate, fitness plays an important role. The best way to fit ourselves is yoga. Yoga involves physical poses, concentration, and deep breathing. Yoga is a mind and body practice. One can achieve complete control of mind over body by being both physically and mentally fit. Yoga and meditation have been practiced in India since ancient times and provides a healthy mind and a sound body. The purpose of this study was to examine the benefits of yoga and meditation on the physical and mental health.

KEYWORDS: Yoga, Meditation and Health



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INTRODUCTION

In today's sedentary lifestyle, there is a greater need than ever to increase the daily activity levels in order to maintain both cardiovascular fitness and body weight. The physical exercises (asanas) in yoga tends to increase the patient's physical flexibility, coordination, and strength, while the breathing practices and meditation helps calm and focus the mind to develop greater awareness and diminish anxiety, and thereby resulting in higher quality of life.

Definition of Yoga: Maharishi Patanjali defined as "Yogashchittavritti Nirodhah" which means "chitta" is mind or "consciousness". Vrittis are thought impulses and "Nirodha" means removal. Yoga is essentially a spiritual discipline based on a extremely subtle science which focuses on bringing harmony between mind and body. It is an art and science of healthy living. The word "Yoga" is derived from the Sanskrit root "Yuj" meaning "to join" yoga is the removal of the fluctuations of the mind.

In action, Yoga is a special skill which makes the mind reaches its subtler state. "Yogah karmasu kaushalam"(GEETA 2.50).Yoga is dexterity in action. The dexterity is in maintaining relaxation and awareness in action. Relaxed action is process. Efficiency in action is an outcome.

Meditation - General Introduction

Meditation is a practice where an individual uses a technique - such as mindfulness, or focusing the mind on a particular object, thought, or activity. Meditation may be beneficial for people of all ages, including kids. The earliest records of meditation (dhyana) are found in the ancient Hindu texts known as the Vedas. Meditation is the act of remaining in a silent and calm state for a period of time, as part of a religious training, or so that you are more able to deal with the problems of everyday life. By elevating stress, meditation can improve your physical health. One of the physical benefits includes reducing the risk of stress related illnesses. Medical practitioners recommend meditation to their patients to reduce stress levels. This includes meditating to decrease your heart rate and blood pressure. They recommend meditation to enhance the body's immune response. Meditation produces a deep state of relaxation and a calm mind, providing mental benefits.

Studies have shown the positive effects meditation has on the brain and on improving memory. It also enhances concentration, attention, and focus. Meditation can improve concentration, whether one needs to concentrate for sports, education, work, or hobbies. Through meditation, you can reduce anxiety and depression that are caused by feelings of hopelessness and disappointment in life.

EFFECT OF YOGA

Physiological Impacts:

Through Yoga, the body triggers a line of beneficial chemical processes within the body, slows the heart rate, reduces the level of blood locate, lessens the muscular tension, leads to more efficient gas exchange in the lungs, lower levels of cortisol and adrenal levels. This is not only boosts the immune system, but also results in higher energy levels, and increased strength.

Normalizing Blood Pressure:

Blood circulation can be improved in the body through Yoga and Pranayama and has proved to treat both High Blood Pressure (Hypertension) and Low Blood Pressure (Hypotension).Practicing Yoga stretches keeps the arteries ductile and reduces the stiffness of the arteries which again lowers the blood pressure.

It results in the creation of positive energy leading to a better and improved lifestyle. Certain Asanas have the power to slow the heart rate by soothing the nerves and minimizes the chances of a heart attack.

Mental Benefits:

It has been found through studies that the benefits of Yoga include increased focus, concentration levels and mental clarity. It also helps to bring down the stresslevels, reduce depression and anxiety. Since the stress is reduced, the sleep cycle is improved. Yoga as a way of life boosts feelings of self image and well being.

Immune System Boost:

When regularly practiced and being in the relaxed state on a regular basis, the brain produce more of the positive neurotransmitter 'serotonin' and stimulates less of the negative 'cortisol' which impairs cognitive skills, trigger high Blood pressure and blood sugar imbalances, affecting the immune system badly.

The Less Demonstrable:

One of the most unique benefits of Yoga is that it leads to a better understanding of one's self, a certain tranquility and awareness level. While some enjoy the

spiritual aspects of the practice, the fact is that it has the power to change a person as a whole by developing their personality.

EFFECT OF MEDITATION:

BENEFITS ON THE PHYSICAL DIMENSION:

Meditation improves physical health by boosting the immune functions, regulating hormonal discharge, and decreasing cellular inflammation. Some researchers found that long-term meditators had more disease-fighting chemicals in their body. Scientists have found that through regular meditation, the chemistry of our body undergoes a remarkable change. Our platelets become less sticky as blood flows more easily throughout the body.

Along with these findings, meditation also plays a significant role in lowering high blood cholesterol levels. It relieves the symptoms of digestive disorders, such as bowel syndrome, etc. It helps in fast healing of skin disorders. It strengthens the immune system, etc. Problems like cancer, asthma, allergies, fatigue, pain in joints, sleep disorders, etc. are also add to the list which are resolved through meditation.

BENEFITS ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSION:

Meditation offers us the state of restful awareness response, it implies that through meditation, there is less production of stress hormones. In the state of restful awareness, we are able to tackle situations in a better way. We become less reflexive and more reflective; less impulsive and more intuitive. As we meditate more, we experience a phase shift from an 'Automatic' response mechanism to a more 'Unconditioned' response mechanism.

BENEFITS ON THE INTELLETUAL DIMENSION:

Meditation casted such an impact on the brain that each subject's MRI displayed an increase in the gray matter in the Hippocampus. Hippocampus is the part of the brain which is responsible for learning, memory, and special orientation. Simultaneously, a reduction in the gray matter of the Amygdala was also noted. The Amygdala is identified as a the fear, stress and anxiety center of the brain. Scientists were amazed to see that in less than two months, meditation can change the physical structure of the brain.

BENEFITS ON THE SPIRITUAL DIMENSION:

Meditation offers the perfect nutrition for the Soul-which is the hub of all the essential traits like positivity, wisdom, will-power, etc. In fact, it is the only means to nourish the Self and cherish the innumerable benefits which are rewarded when one comes in contact with his inner being. Socrates has defined meditation in just two words-'Know Thyself'-which is inscribed in the temple at Delphi. These two words together carry in them the ultimate code of 'peace', 'happiness', 'relaxation' and 'success'. In the Buddhist teachings, it is said that meditation is the means to reach to the root of the mind.

CONCLUSION

The benefits of increased feelings of relaxation, improved self-confidence and body image, improved efficiency, better interpersonal relationships, increase in attentiveness through Yoga and meditation as a way of life encourages an optimistic outlook on life.

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